



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM WEEK
June 1 - 7, 2003

By the Secretary of Agriculture of the United States of America

A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS for over two months every year, schools close their doors for summer vacation. As a result, millions of children who depend on school meals to meet a substantial amount of their daily nutrient needs do not have the opportunity to participate in the school nutrition programs. This lack of access to basic nutrition is most pronounced among the Nation's poorest children, who frequently have no alternative to school meals.

WHEREAS to remedy this situation, Congress established the Summer Food Service Program to ensure that children can continue to receive nutritious midday meals at school playgrounds, parks, camps and other sites where they traditionally gather when they are on summer vacation. Moreover, Congress specifically targeted the administration of this program to sites located in very poor areas, defined as areas where at least 50 percent of the children are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.

WHEREAS unfortunately, far too few children are able to take advantage of this vital program. Despite being targeted to very poor areas, the program serves fewer than 15 percent of the children who receive free and reduced-price meals during the school year. To address this situation, the U. S. Department of Agriculture has been actively working to increase the number of eligible schools and other sponsors who offer the program to their communities. These efforts have included making significant reductions in the paperwork associated with administering the program and finding creative ways of attracting sponsors.

WHEREAS as part of this initiative, the Department has designated the first full week of June of each year as Summer Food Service Program Week and is issuing a proclamation formally observing this event. The purpose of this observation is two-fold. Firstly, the Department wishes to recognize the important efforts of those organizations already sponsoring the program. Secondly, the Department wishes to heighten public awareness of the benefits of this program for poor communities and to encourage additional eligible sponsors to participate.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ANN M. VENEMAN, Secretary of Agriculture, do hereby proclaim June 1 through June 7, 2003, as Summer Food Service Program Week. I call upon communities to recognize the important achievements of schools and organizations that sponsor this program and to ensure that children and their parents are aware of this benefit. I also strongly urge eligible schools and organizations that are not participating to make this vital component of our nutrition safety net available in their communities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 12th day of May in the year two thousand and three, and the two hundred and twenty-seventh year of the Independence of the United States of America.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ann Veneman", is positioned above the printed name and title.

ANN M. VENEMAN
SECRETARY